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ABSTRACT

The benefits of international educational exchange programs, particularly the Fulbright exchange program, are discussed in this speech to 78 visiting Fulbright scholars in the United States teaching at American universities or carrying out research in areas ranging from medicine to linguistics. A primary benefit mentioned is that while such programs cannot eliminate aggression or hostility in the international community they can contribute to a feeling of a human community and to an awareness that other nations are populated by people rather than by ideologies. Another benefit cited is that although international educational exchange may be seen as slow-moving in times of crisis, it is still a powerful and inexpensive force, particularly when compared to a nation's arms expenditures. (AEA)

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REMARKS BY JOHN E. REINHARDT

DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AGENCY

Opening luncheon of Conference for Visiting Fulbright Scholars

Benjamin Franklin Room, Department of State

Washington, D.C.

Monday, March 17, 1980

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It is my very great pleasure to welcome you and your families to Washington.

I learned recently that scholars from other lands were not always welcome in this city. In 1798, John Adams, our second President, recommended that some French scientists not be admitted to the United States. He wrote, "I really begin to think, or rather to suspect, that learned academics, not under the immediate inspection of the government, have disorganized the world, and are incompatible with social order."

Fortunately for our country, President Adams was wrong, and we have been greeting scholars from other lands ever since.

Your presence here today renews my hope in the future of our civilization on this planet, a hope I confess has been tested of late. The program which has brought you to the United States and which sends many Americans to your own nations each year for study and teaching bears the name of a great American who, 34 years ago, had a dream of a world in which constructive cooperation would replace armed conflict among peoples.

The year 1946 was not particularly auspicious for such vision. Only 21 years elapsed between the "war to end all wars" and World War II, which had just ended with the destruction by nuclear bombs of two cities in Japan and the devastation of much of Europe.

Yet it was precisely such indiscriminate destruction by new and sophisticated weapons that suggested to a young Senator from Arkansas named J. William Fulbright that some new approach to international relations was essential. He reasoned that if a large number of people knew and understood people from nations other than their own, "they might," he said, "develop a capacity for empathy, a distaste for killing other men, and an inclination for peace."

A disarmingly simple, even naive-sounding notion, to be sure, but one responsible for what an Oxford don several years ago called "the largest, most significant movement of scholars across the face of the earth since the fall of Constantinople in 1453." In fact, since 1946, the Fulbright program has enabled some 45,000 Americans to teach and study in other nations, and some 80,000 scholars and leaders from over 100 countries to teach and study in the United States. Thanks to the idealism and practicality of Senator Fulbright, thousands of Americans have broken out of the parochialism engendered by the size of their nation and its distance from other countries. Friendships have been forged, working partnerships in productive research have been formed, even entire curricula of universities have been changed as a result of the creativity and energy of the participants in this program. You are part of this continuing experience, and I feel privileged to be able to greet you this afternoon.

But the significance of the Fulbright program does not rest on its size alone. Indeed, its results are surely more in the realm of quality than quantity. As Senator Fulbright said in 1946 when he proposed his bill to the Senate, "It is never possible to prove what word or ideas may have changed the course of events, but we do know from history the narrow margins by which some decisions are made." True enough, but I am convinced that those who have participated in the program over the years have helped to move the world toward that "new approach" to international relations sought by Senator Fulbright.

I am also convinced that the Fulbright program has helped to teach many Americans and people of other societies what one observer has called "global coping." To be able to "cope globally" is an imperative of the educated person, for it means the ability to perceive reality through the repeated clash of ideologies, ethnocentrisms, fears, and hostilities.

We know, or have been told time and again over the past several years, that the world has changed, that its constituent parts have become interdependent in ways entirely different from anything we recognized before, and that we must think globally and behave as citizens of the world if humanity is to survive. And we know in some sense, to some degree, that these are not merely rhetorical alarms, but that they must be true.

There have always been in this country and elsewhere individuals -- including an American Presidential candidate in 1940 -- who have shared a vision of one world and gloried in the celebration of internationalism that accompanied the foundation of the United Nations. Several of this country's greatest satesmen of that era and since have given profound evidence of that persuasion. And many others have long been convinced that the inevitable world involvements of all nations demand a far broader frame of reference than we have been able to devise.

The key question now is whether the world's best minds are capable of formulating, expressing, believing, and acting on a conception of interdependence. Can we forge a true global community appropriate to the reality of world conditions in the decade of the 1980's? What is it that we really mean when we use those two words -- global community, peeling back for a moment the rhetoric which has assaulted our ears so frequently?

A global community begins to emerge only when there is a system of at least minimally shared values and a growing awareness of genuine interdependence; only when there is a sharing of some common rules and some common institutions; only when there is an awareness and a sense that we are operating with reasonably equitable partaking of social and economic benefits.

This is a very complex mixture of subjective and objective conditions, and it creates an ever-growing need for an intellectual fraternity that is global in its outlook, global in its historical perspective, and universal in its values.

It seems to me that, more than any other program, the one in which you are taking part meets this need.

But just as certainly, the grim situation in the world today tells us that we are a long way from the true global community. Even the hackneyed word "interdependence" itself is called into question. Surely the world is united in the purely physical sense of economic and scientific interdependence, but in the far more complicated psychological and spiritual sense, the world remains divided into national communities which value their separate sovereignty over their common humanity. We all know of the gap between scientific and technological power and political wisdom in international relations.

But the picture is not entirely bleak. International educational exchange programs can help us break through some of the prevailing myths of relations among nations. One of the more pervasive and pernicious of these is the belief that different political philosophies cannot survive together in the same world, that sooner or later one must prevail over the other. As I heard the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. say once in commenting on military competition among nations, "The only problem with the notion of 'an eye for an eye' is that we may all end up blind."

There is of course no guarantee that educational exchange across frontiers is certain to produce affection among peoples; indeed, that may not be one of its objectives. Nor will exchange prevent states from pursuing geopolitical goals to the possible detriment of other states. Neither can it eliminate aggresssion or hostility in the international community, any more than it can wipe out hunger, poverty, inequality or other ills that afflict human society. But it is quite enough if international educational exchange contributes to the feeling of a human community, to an awareness that other nations are populated <u>not</u> by ideologies that we fear but by <u>people</u>, with the same capacity for pleasure and pain, cruelty and kindness and all of the other attributes which characterize human beings.

For these and other reasons, your stay in the United States is important for far more than academic and professional considerations, although these obviously loom larger in your reckoning. In ways more important than you might suspect, you as individuals and as participants in the Fulbright program can make a major contribution to the Senator's dream of greater understanding among peoples. You can help Americans understand -- far more than they ever could in a classroom or from a book -- the ideas, the aspirations, the customs that shape your own cultures. Through you, Americans can learn that one culture values spiritual development over material achievement, another values tradition over change, still another values group activities over individual initiative.

In the same way I urge you to try to understand what makes Americans the way we are, why we view the world as we do, what we think about. Simply knowing these differences -- and similarities -- among peoples as abstractions is not the same as understanding the depth of emotion or complexity of reason that stands behind the patterns of belief underlying our varying perceptions of the world.

Ultimately, after all, mutual understanding -- and misunderstanding -- rest upon perceptions, and not upon hard, clear realities. We have learned from history that what people believe to be true is far more important, in understanding human affairs, than the "true facts." And one can understand the variety of these perceptions, their power to move to extraordinary heights and depths only through direct, face-to-face experience over a period of time.

As you return to your own countries at the end of your stay in the United States, the knowledge and experience you will have gained both in your respective fields and in your understanding of Americans will serve as another link in what we all hope will be a chain of greater understanding. We, too, will surely have gained much from your presence here.

I urge you to be aware of the importance of this opportunity for genuine and valuable communication across and between cultures, and to take advantage of it. Despite the differences between cultures which I referred to a few minutes ago, the problems of all nations are remarkably similar, whether a nation embraces the philosophy of Adam Smith, Karl Marx or someone else. No nation, no matter how much it may wish it, can live in isolation in today's world. Indeed, all societies have something of value to contribute to the continuing efforts of man to improve his lot on earth and to prevent his ultimate destruction by the awful weapons he has invented. It is significant that all countries, even though they may denigrate the United Nations, nevertheless want to be a part of that organization. Moreover, pollution, food scarcity, poverty, and disease do not respect political boundaries. If famine strikes one nation, the effects will touch many others. And, of course, as Senator Fulbright realized many years ago, nuclear war would touch us all.

If our lives are to be made reasonably secure in this nuclear age, there is no alternative to an international community capable of making and enforcing civilized rules of international conduct. To this great end we must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy, and perception, and there is really no way of doing that except through fostering mutual understanding.

Paradoxically, in times of crisis such as we face in the world today, our common goal of greater understanding through educational exchange is both in jeopardy and more crucial than ever. Crucial because, although exchanges are not a panacea, they are the only means to this goal; in jeopardy because they may be perceived as slow-moving at a time when urgency is confused with importance.

Educational exchange may not be fast enough or strong enough to save us from catastrophe, but it is the strongest force available for that purpose. It is also the least expensive force, no small consideration in an age when nations around the world are expending over 250 billion dollars of their scarce resources on arms. The

cost of the Fulbright Program since 1946, for example, is about half of the cost of one nuclear submarine today. Far from being frills on the periphery of international relations, educational exchange deserves a place of prominence and permanence in the affairs of nations.

In spite of the currently gloomy international scene, I hope that you sense, as I do, an atmosphere of change in the world today. Our globe has endured two world wars, countless smaller conflicts, and human suffering unparalleled in modern history. Now there is a growing, worldwide search for something else, for something better; for new values, for a more equitable and more secure life for all. I would like to think that educational exchange across frontiers has had something to do with this nascent spirit of change.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks today, your presence here renews my hope for the survival of our civilization. I believe firmly that over a period of time the massive exchange of present and future generations of men and women will cause today's differences in ideologies and cultures to be recognized as less significant to people than their common humanity and their need to live in peace with their fellow humans. I am reminded of something Pericles wrote on the lasting effect of inspiration in terms which could well summarize all intercultural exchanges: "the effect lives on far away, without visible symbol, woven into the stuff of men's lives."

Some may call it naive to believe so deeply in the lasting value of exchanges or to invest one's confidence in a harmonious future, but I am loathe to consider the alternatives. If not educational exchanges, we might ask the skeptics, then what better means for genuine change and a break in the vicious cycle of this century's recurrent violence?

Certainly our problems today are complex, difficult, some even intractable, but I for one choose not to retreat into a shell of hopelessness and despair. We

are rational beings capable of learning new information and acting on the basis of that information. Something new will emerge; I am quite certain of it.

I believe that if nations take advantage of genuine communication and exchange across borders, we can better understand each other -- our civilizations, our cultures, our daily existences. We can indeed shape our changing world for the betterment of all.

Again, I welcome you to Washington, and I wish you success in your conference and an enjoyable and profitable experience for the remainder of your stay in the United States.